

Welcome



Module 1 – Looking at psychosis, and personal experiences of psychosis

Welcome to the trial

The aim of these sessions is for you to talk and think about your experiences. We also hope that it provide you with information so that you can make informed decisions about cannabis use and your health. The trial consists of 6 modules which are around 30 minutes each.

Module 1 – Introduction

Module 2 – Cannabis and Mental Health

Module 3 – Impact on your life

Module 4 – Weighing up

Module 5 – Personal Hazards

Module 6 – Summary

What is the trial?

These sessions are part of the circle trial. This study is exploring interventions that help reduce rates of relapse in people that have experience of psychosis.

We hope these hand outs will provide additional resources for you to access further information. You may also want to jot down your thoughts.



Your Story



- **What led to you coming into contact with mental health services and being here today? ? What have your experiences been like?**

- **What sense do you make of these experiences?**

- **What do you think caused or contributed to these experiences?**



Want to know more about psychosis?



Module 1 – Looking at psychosis, and personal experiences of psychosis

What Causes Psychosis?

A number of theories have been suggested to explain what causes psychosis, but the research is on-going. There is some indication that psychosis is caused by a combination of biological factors in early development which creates a vulnerability to experiencing psychotic symptoms during adolescence or early adult life. Symptoms (explained on the next page) are triggered in response to stress, substance use (like cannabis) or social changes in vulnerable individuals. Some of these factors may be more or less important in different individuals.

Who is affected?

The NHS states that psychosis is more common than most people realise. Research carried out in 2010 found that in England in any given year, there would be one new diagnosed case of psychosis for every 2,000 people. Another study estimated that around one in 100 people have at least one episode of psychosis at some point during their life. Most cases of psychosis first develop during the older teenage years (15 or above) or during adulthood. Cases affecting children under the age of 15 are rare, accounting for only one in every 500 cases.



For more information go to:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Psychosis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/psychosis/>

Want to know more about psychosis?



Symptoms

Experiencing a period of psychosis can result in changes in mood and thinking, and this can lead to ideas and thoughts that other people find hard to explain to others. In order to try and understand the experience of psychosis it is useful to group together some of the more characteristic symptoms. This list is by no means exhaustive but can give a flavour of the more commonly experienced symptoms.

Confused thinking

Everyday thoughts can become confused or don't join up properly. Sentences may be unclear or don't make sense. A person may have difficulty concentrating, following a conversation or remembering things. Thoughts may seem to speed up or slow down.

False beliefs

It is common for a person experiencing a psychotic episode to hold beliefs based on little or no evidence that cannot be understood by those around them. These are known as delusions. At times we all misinterpret information, especially when we are tired or stressed. A delusional belief is similar to this but the person is so convinced of their delusion that the most logical argument cannot make them change their mind. For example, someone may be convinced from the way cars are parked outside their house that they are being watched by the police or may believe that others mean them harm.

Hallucinations

During a psychotic episode a person may see things that other people do not. For example seeing a vision of a religious figure or seeing an everyday object or face appearing distorted. People may also hear voices that other people can not or feel, smell or taste something that has no apparent cause for example an insect crawling on their skin.

Changed feelings

During psychosis the way someone feels may change, they may feel strange and cut off from the world. Emotions may feel dampened and they may show less emotion to those around them. Changes in mood are also common and they may feel unusually excited or depressed.

Changed behaviour

People with psychosis may behave differently from the way they usually do. They may be extremely active or lethargic. They may laugh inappropriately or become angry or upset without apparent cause. Often, changes in behaviour are associated with the symptoms already described above. For example, a person believing they are in danger may call the police. Someone who believes they are Jesus Christ may spend the day preaching in the streets.

If you have any concerns or questions relating to these symptoms please contact your early intervention team.

Why do people use cannabis?

- **Why do you use cannabis? What things do you like about it?**

- **What other reasons might people have for using cannabis?**





How cannabis can impact your mental health?

What effect does cannabis have?

- Cannabis can make psychotic symptoms worse.
- People often experience more hallucinations, delusions and other symptoms.
- It generally slows down recovery so that more medication, taken for much longer periods, is needed to manage symptoms.
- This can lead to the need for more frequent use of crisis services and more frequent and longer stays in hospital.
- All this can make it much harder to get back to 'normal' things and more difficult to get on with life as you would like to.

Why?

Cannabis contains a chemical known as THC. THC is a psychoactive substance. This means it travels through the bloodstream to the brain, disrupting its usual functioning and causing intoxicating effects. Some of these effects can be pleasant and some unpleasant. Most of these effects are short-term but some can be long-term. This causes a release of chemicals which make you feel relaxed, happy, anxious or paranoid.

After an episode of psychosis the nerves and chemicals in the brain start working in a slightly different way. Now, when you use cannabis this can quickly contribute to destabilising the brain chemistry and prompt the return or escalation of your symptoms.

People are at greater risk, if they have had a first episode of psychosis and are more likely to start showing symptoms if they use cannabis regularly. Risks increase the greater the quantity and more often the person smokes cannabis.

For more information go to:

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/cannabis.aspx>

Cannabis and your mental health



Module 2 – Exploring personal use of cannabis and looking at how cannabis can impact on mental health.

On a scale of 1 – 10, how much do you believe that cannabis impacts on your mental health?



Cannabis definitely does NOT have an impact on my mental health

Cannabis definitely DOES have an impact on my mental health

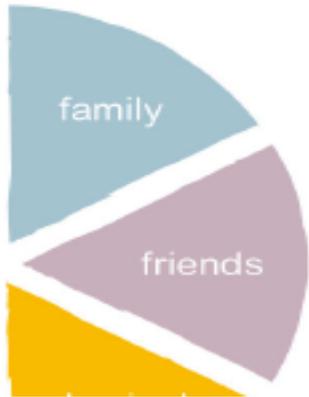




Impact ratings...

Q1: To what extent is using cannabis having a positive or negative impact on different aspects of your life?

Negative impact			No impact	Positive impact		
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
on your family life?						
on your social life?						
on your physical health?						
on your financial life?						
on your activities?						
on your mental health?						
Total impact rating =						



My Social Network

If relationships with family and friends is a problem area it may be useful to draw a social network diagram (see example on next page)

- Put yourself in the middle then draw all your contacts around you.
- Draw those who are most emotionally closest to you as physically closer to you in the diagram and those who are less close as further away
- If we introduce or remove cannabis from the diagram (this could be represented as a circle around you), does this change the position of anyone in your social network diagram?

Consider...

How often do you see each person?

Are they a friend or more of an acquaintance?

Which of the group use cannabis?

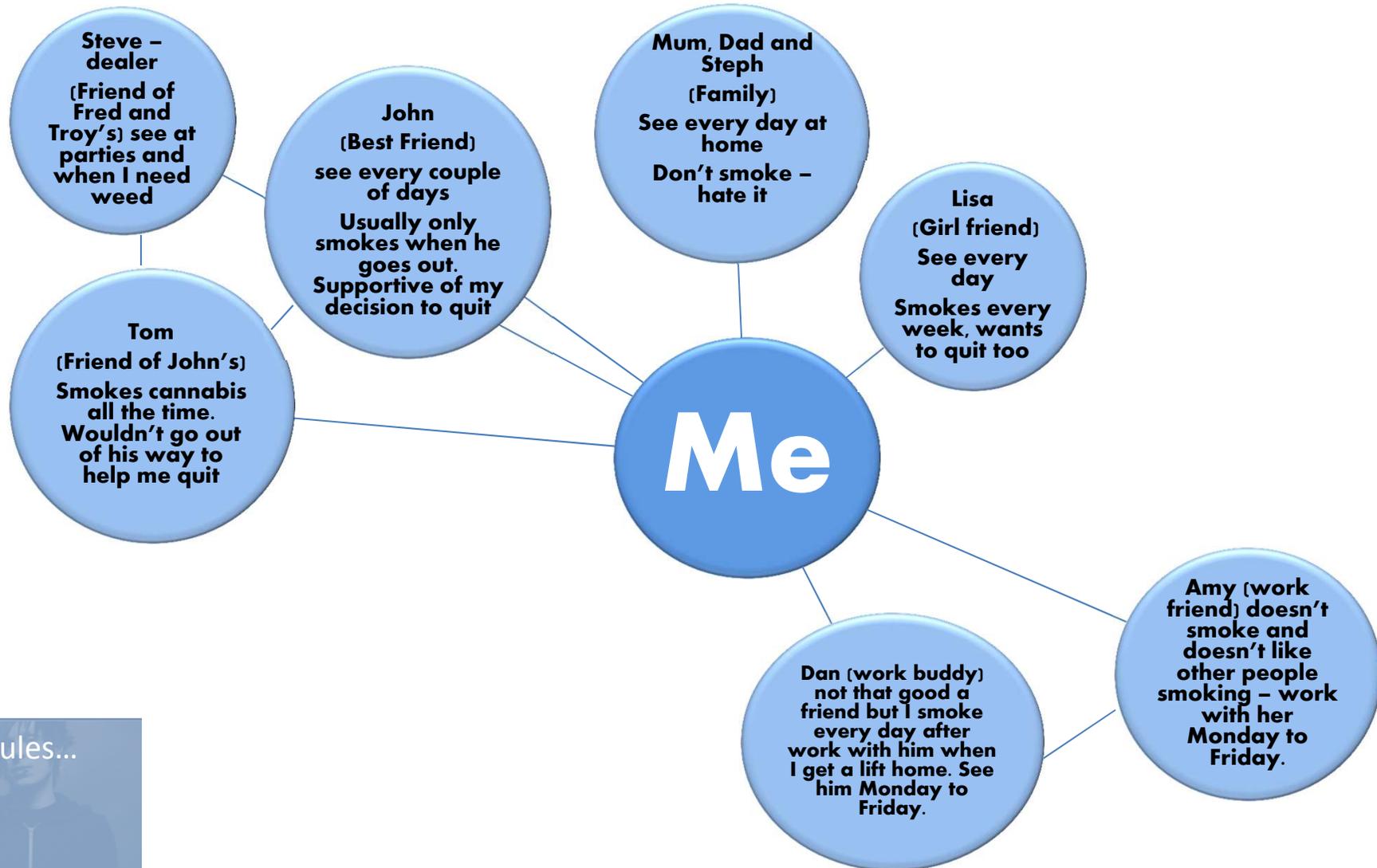
Who do you use cannabis with?

Who would be supportive of you changing?

Modules...

3 & 4

My Social Network - An Example



Modules...

3 & 4

My Social Network



Modules...

3 & 4

My Social Network



Modules...

3 & 4



Financial

Does your cannabis use have a big impact on your finances?

How much money per year do you spend on cannabis?

£ per year

What other things could you spend this much money on? Do you have any financial goals?

Cannabis Expenditure	Goals
£.....	



Activity

Does your cannabis use have a large impact on the activities you do?

What activities do you want to do in your life? Make a “to do” list, try and include activities such as work or studying as well as big dreams for your future!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
-

	✓ or ✗		✓ or ✗		✓ or ✗
Working on Computers		Art		Fishing	
Gym		Join a Band/ learn an instrument		Social Clubs	
Shopping		Football		Pool/ Snooker	
Day Trips		Cricket		Camping	
Travelling		Yoga		Study something new	
Water sports		Mechanics		Cinema	
Dancing		Rock Climbing		Photography	
DJ'ing		Writing		Voluntary Work	
Theatre		Singing		Driving	
DIY		Cycling		Snow Boarding/Skiing	
Reading		Spending time with friends		Table Tennis	
Swimming		Woodwork		Basketball	
Cookery		Rugby		Coaching	
Learn a language		Learn magic!		Blogging	



Physical Health and the Law

Physical Health and Cannabis

Some people think cannabis is harmless just because it's a plant- but it isn't harmless. Cannabis, like tobacco, has lots of harmful chemicals, which can cause lung-disease and possibly cancer with long-term or heavy use, especially as it is often mixed with tobacco and smoked without a filter. It can also make asthma worse, and cause wheezing in non-asthma sufferers.

Cannabis itself can affect many different systems in the body, including the heart by increasing the heart rate and affecting blood pressure.

It is reported that frequent use of cannabis can cut a man's sperm count, reduce sperm motility, and can suppress ovulation in women and so may affect fertility.

The Law and Cannabis

Cannabis is an illegal substance; it is a Class B drug. If you are caught with cannabis, the Police will always take some action. This could be a warning, a reprimand, a formal caution, a fixed penalty or an arrest and possible conviction.

A conviction for a drug-related offence could have a pretty serious impact. It can stop you visiting certain countries – for example the United States – and limit the types of jobs you can apply for, for example public sector jobs.

The maximum sentence for possession of cannabis is 5 years or an unlimited fine, or both. The maximum sentence for supplying cannabis is 14 years or an unlimited fine, or both!

Remember driving on drugs is illegal just like drink driving.



The good and the bad...

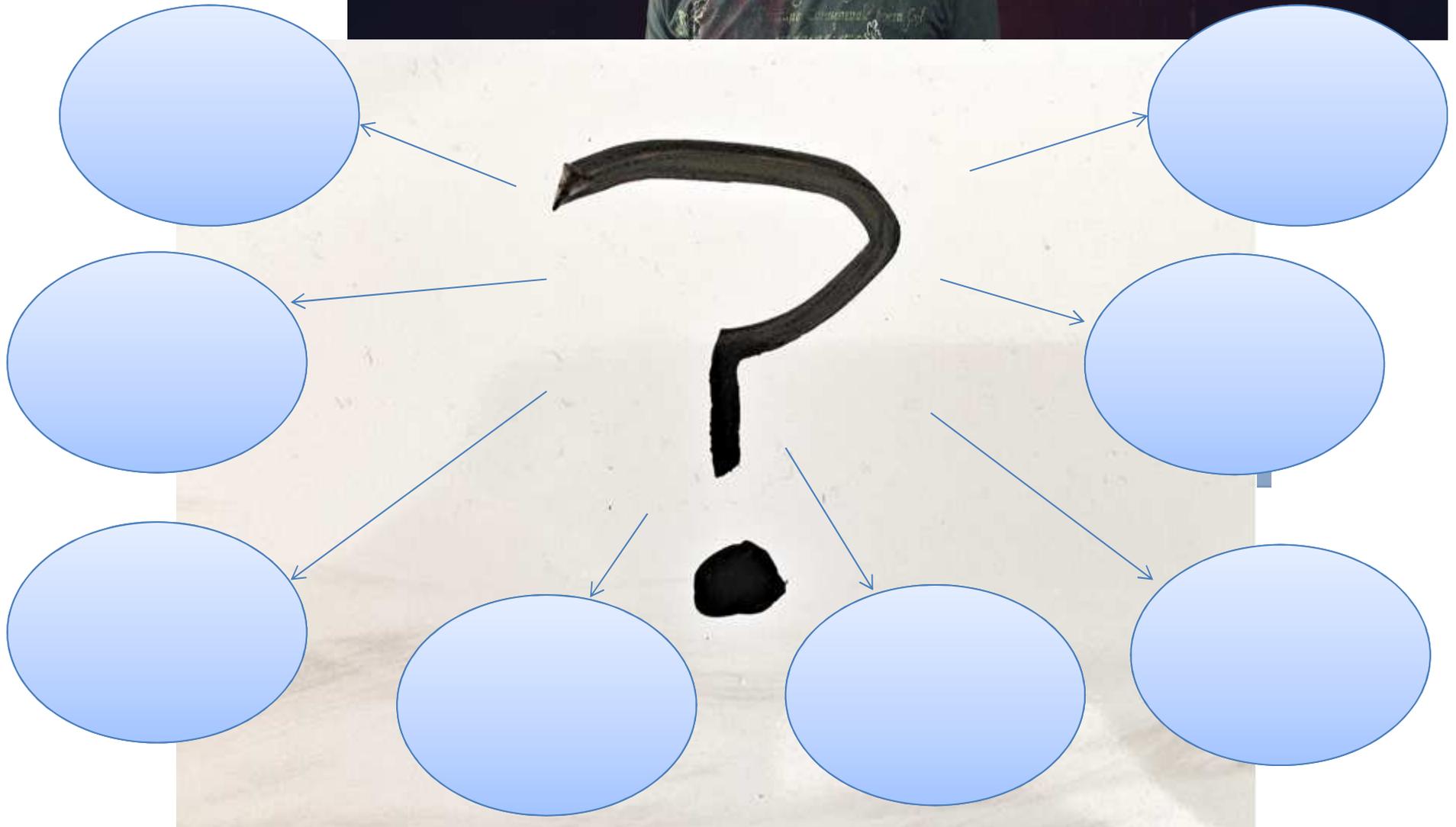
Short term effects of stopping cannabis

The good things	The not so good things

Long term effects of stopping cannabis

The good things	The not so good things

The impact on you...





High Risk Situations

Where I just might be tempted to smoke more than I want to...

Family

- When my parents are out and I think
- I won't get caught
- When I have had an argument at home,
- and am feeling stressed out
-
-
-

Friends/Social

- When I am with friends who are smoking
- When friends have free cannabis to offer
- On Friday nights, when we all go out and everyone is using
- When I have to meet people I don't know

Health

- When I feel stressed and anxious
- about things
- When I can't sleep
-
-

Finances

- When I have some cash to spare
- Work & Time
- When I am bored and feel there is nothing else to do
-
-

The Law

- Getting caught by the police
-
-



Module...

-
-
-
-

Combat strategies if you are still using cannabis



Family

Think about your family's concerns; minimize conflict where possible
Use cannabis when not in the presence of concerned family members
If there are regular 'fall outs' with relationships as the result of cannabis use, avoid use on "date nights" or other important occasions

Friends

Make sure you get your cannabis from a reliable source
Before you go out, think about what you will do if your friend/dealer is out of supply
Consider what you have to do to get cannabis, and find ways to minimize anxiety and paranoid thoughts
Avoid using alone in novel environments
Be assertive to avoid consuming more cannabis than

desired – Do you know when you have had enough?

Physical Health

Set realistic limits on cannabis intake e.g. pace self, miss rounds, minimise inhalation if smoking, avoid holding smoke in lungs, smoke less per round.
Don't drive or get involved in dangerous activities while intoxicated
Avoid unsafe circumstances (e.g., late at night on the street, hitchhiking, hanging out in unknown environments)
Use marijuana Instead of hashish or skunk, and smoke "leaf" Instead of 'head'
Avoid sharing joints to minimise the sharing of saliva
Avoid using tobacco or herbal preparations
Use plain cardboard instead of coloured/ laminated card for filters – inks can be toxic
Avoid using cannabis when pregnant as it can harm your baby

Mental Health

Get your supply from a trusted dealer when you are feeling well
Try not to use cannabis when feeling angry or low in mood

Avoid cannabis when experiencing symptoms of psychosis

Finance

Pay your bills and buy essentials before spending on cannabis
Before buying think about what you can afford, and what else you might need the money for
Budget so that you have money for other necessary commodities

Work & Time

Use at times when you are commitment free and it won't impact on your ability to do essential activities
Have a think about your goals, and whether cannabis use is preventing you from doing what you want to do
Keep occupied with other activities to reduce cannabis intake
Set Limits on Time Spent in Cannabis Permissive Environments.



Module...



What if I mess up?

What happens if I don't stick to my plan?

Stopping using cannabis is not always going to be easy. Most people find they make small slip-ups at the beginning and find it hard to give up first time BUT if you keep trying the chances of succeeding become much higher.

It's important to remember that we are all human and people make mistakes.

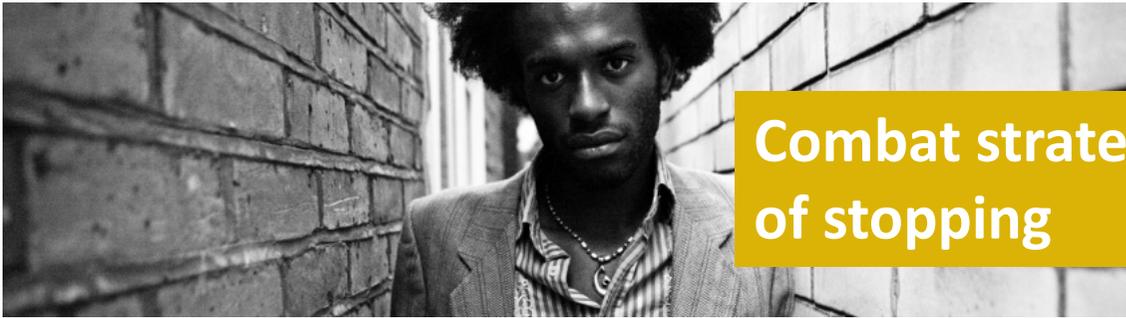
What should I do?

Often when people have a lapse, they feel very bad and see it as the end of the world and their attempt at abstinence.

However, it is much more useful to accept that you have had a bit of a set back and then get right back on track again. If you stop trying that is when you have really failed, after all, one night of heavy cannabis use is not as bad as another week, month or year.

Don't let one mistake ruin all of your efforts!





Combat strategies if you are thinking of stopping

Family

Relationships can be put under pressure if you are experiencing difficulties with stopping. Ask your family for support during this time

Friends

Get some back up from someone who you think will be a positive influence and support you as you quit
Find someone you can talk to about things when the going gets tough
Practice refusal skills if others are trying to persuade you to use cannabis.

Principles of Refusal Skills

Be **ASSERTIVE** in body language and tone of voice

Make direct eye contact. Stand or sit at the same level or above the person offering cannabis. Use a strong, firm, confident voice. People are less likely to persist if you look and sound convincing

Without hesitation, so NO!

Be firm but polite. 'No' can be expanded with a statement about your intention to stop using. For example, "No sorry, haven't you heard? I quit" etc.

Suggest an ALTERNATIVE activity rather than use

It might be useful to suggest activities in non-smoking environments. For example, "No thanks – who is up for a game of football?" "What about a movie?"

When/If challenged, Repeat yourself – 'broken record technique'.

People will get the message that you won't change your mind if you repeat yourself over and over again without variation. "No, not for me thanks, I've quit."
If all else fails – BE prepared to LEAVE.
If people will not take no for an answer, and if you feel it is becoming too difficult to stick to your intentions, then avoidance is the best policy.

Refusal Skills:

Suggestions for when offered

- No thanks I'm driving
- No thanks, doctor's orders
- I have to work tomorrow
- I quit
- Sorry, but if I cough up my lungs once more, I won't have any left
- Not tonight, thanks
- I've had enough, but thanks anyway
- I don't enjoy it any more
- I'd rather have a coffee (or whatever)





More Combat strategies if you are thinking of stopping

Refusal Skills:

Suggestions for the challenged

- No thanks or tempting, but no thanks
- No, I really don't feel like it or I'd rather not go into detail, but I really can't because of my health
- If it is a problem for you, I can leave and catch up with you later
- No, but you go right ahead.
- This is hard enough – please don't make it harder
- I really would prefer a coffee – I don't mind making it myself
- Hey, what's the big deal?
- I would have thought you would be more supportive

- Better not- what about that game of footy last night... (changing the topic)

Physical Health

Exercise can assist withdrawal because it is a distraction, and it improves sleep, appetite, and mood

Eat regular, nutritious meals to avoid rises and falls in blood sugar levels as this may increase irritability and low mood.

Finances

Plan some fun and enjoyable activities to reward yourself with the money you saved

Put the money you are saving aside to save up for something you really want

Work & Time

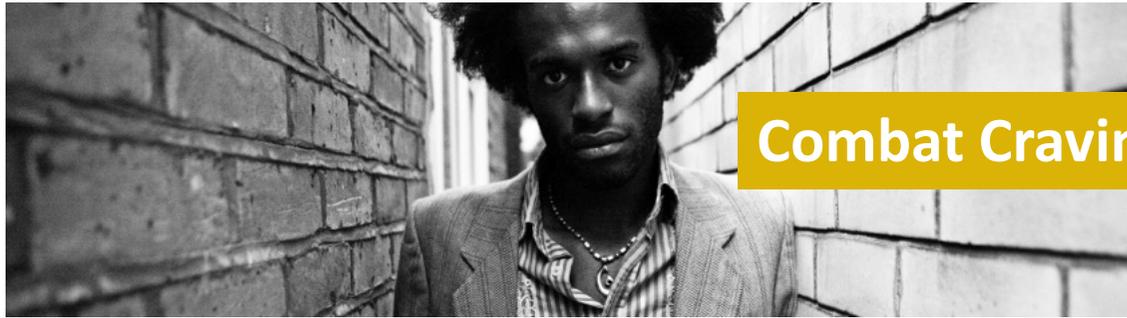
Structure day: Schedule regular activity, set meal times and consistent sleep patterns in order to re-establish regular lifestyle.

Mental Health

Take one day at a time, and focus on coping with the present and any challenges you are experiencing with quitting

Remember that withdrawal and craving symptoms are short lived and will pass quickly.





Combat Cravings

Here are some ideas for managing CRAVINGS: The 4 D's

Delay:

Cravings are time limited.

As the intense phase of cravings normally lasts no more than one hour. Getting through this period of strong craving can be uncomfortable and difficult, but it isn't going to last long. By delaying the urge to smoke by 30 minutes, you can "ride the wave" and find that the urges pass quickly.

Distract:

Look at activity to help ride it out. Do something that will take your mind off

your symptoms and cravings. Here are some techniques for switching attention from cravings:

- Try some mental exercises like mental arithmetic, reciting a song, remembering the last 10 winners of your favourite Sport
- Do an activity like some housework, a small project around the house, some exercise, or watching a DVD or listening to some music.
- Use some relaxation techniques.

Detest:

Remember the 'not-so-good' times. Cravings can often sway individuals to focus on the good things associated with cannabis. To help manage cravings, remind yourself of the reasons you decided.

Discuss: Phone a friend

When craving cannabis, it is easy to find an argument to have "just one last joint". Find a reliable person who you can chat with whenever you are tempted to use cannabis again.

It may help to consult with a medical doctor to manage the immediate symptoms of withdrawal such as sleep disturbance. Continued use of anti-psychotic medication may also help.

Increased anxiety and panic may be symptoms of your withdrawal. Try some relaxation and breathing techniques to help you cope with this anxiety.



Module...



Imagery Techniques

There are also some other ways to cope with cravings. Often the urges people feel are in the form of images. Imagery is not always easy but if you master it then it can become a really powerful coping strategy.

- **Mastery:** This is an image where the person masters their craving. You could imagine yourself going home to your family not having used any cannabis and telling them how well you are doing at meeting your goals.
- **Alternative:** Replace the image with an alternative “healthy” image, instead of picturing yourself getting high, picture yourself going on a jog or buying something with all the money you have saved.
- **Fast forward:** Unfreeze the image and move it on in time to remind yourself that you are only imagining part of the picture, which could be distorted. Using cannabis may look like an appealing image now but try and imagine how you might feel the next day or worse, if smoking cannabis led to a psychotic relapse.
- **Overcome the urge:** Transform the image from one that feels overwhelming to an image of successfully overcoming the urge/craving. Imagine yourself on the other side of the craving- on average a craving only lasts between 3-5 minutes even though it can feel much longer.





Relaxation tips

Here are some relaxation tips from the NHS to relieve stress:

- Practise deep breathing at a regular time and in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Loosen or remove any tight clothes you have on, such as shoes or jackets. Make yourself feel completely comfortable.
- Sit in a comfy chair which supports your head or lie on the floor or bed. Place your arms on the chair arms, or flat on the floor or bed, a little bit away from the side of your body with the palms up. If you're lying down, stretch out your legs, keeping them hip-width apart or slightly wider. If you're sitting in a chair, don't cross your legs.
- Good relaxation always starts with focusing on your breathing. The way to do it is to breathe in and out slowly and in a regular rhythm as this will help you to calm down.
- Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first).
- Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five.
- Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.
- Practise this relaxed breathing for three to five minutes, two to three times a day (or whenever you feel stressed).



For more information go to:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/ways-relieve-stress.aspx>

Problem scenarios



Life Area	Hazardous Situation	Degree of Hazard (0-10)

Degree of Hazard: 10 = Severe, 7 = Moderate, 4 = Mild, 0 = Nil

Problem scenarios 2

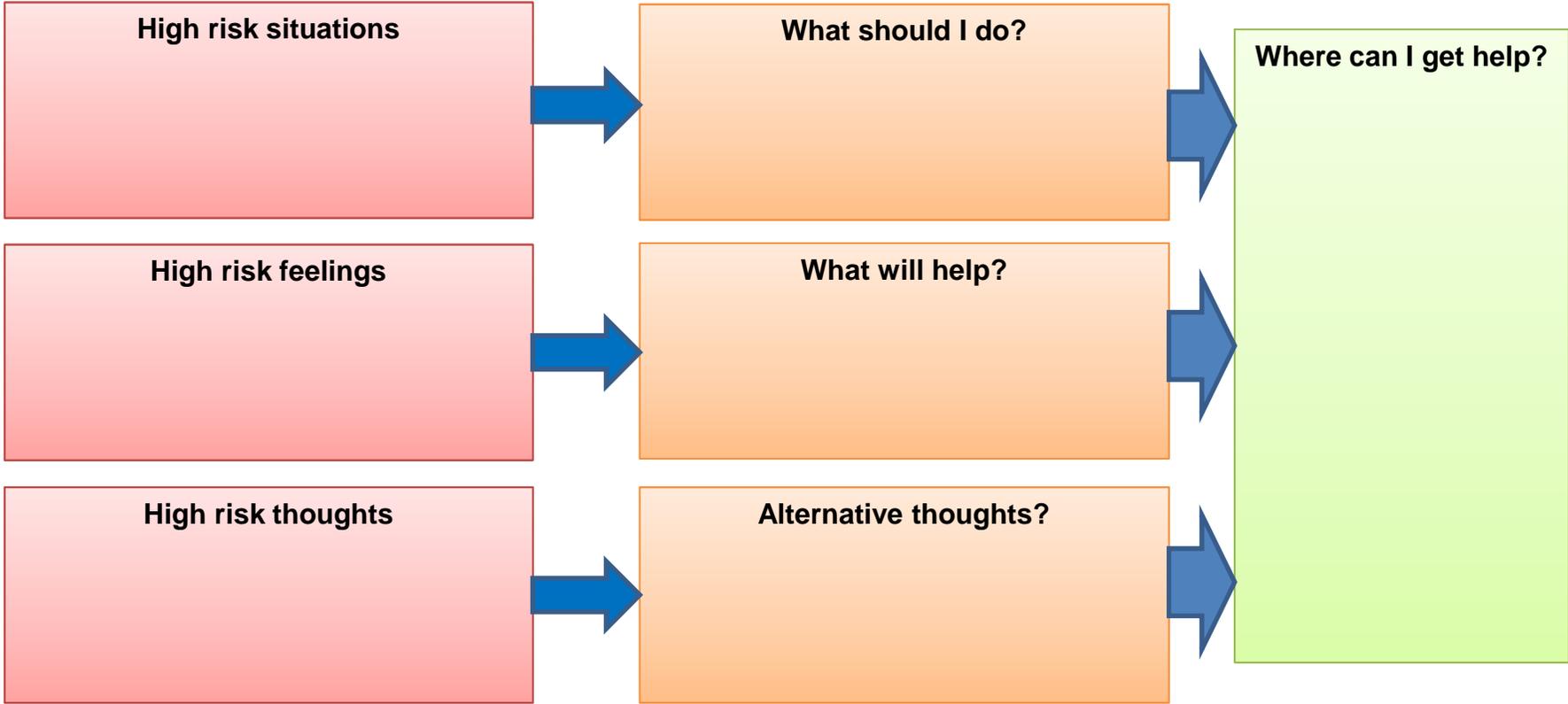


Life Area	Hazard Combat Strategy

My Plan- Giving it up



My Goal and Motivation



My Plan- Cutting Down



My Goal and Motivation

What times will I find it easier to cut down? Are there certain times I definitely do not want to smoke? Work? Around my children?

Will I be able to smoke smaller joints or fewer to help me cut down? What strategies might be helpful?

What benefits do I hope to gain from cutting down?

If cutting down gets hard, where can I find support?



Helpful Resources

Now that you know what you know, it's up to you to decide!

If you want to find out more information about the things we have covered, you can talk to your care co-ordinator. There are a number of ways we can support you if you do want to quit.

Also you can look at these websites for some more information about cannabis use and your health:

www.talktofrank.com or call FRANK on 0800 77 66 00.

You can also get **Cannabis – too much too often?** The FRANK guide to cutting down and stopping cannabis use, by calling 08701 555 455.

www.knowcannabis.org.uk where you can find out more about the effects of cannabis and how to go about cutting down and stopping.

www.csip.org.uk/mentalhealthandcannabis for more on the research into the links between cannabis and mental health problems.

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/drugs/Pages/Cannabisdangers.aspx the nhs website has further information and links on where to find help

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/cannabis.aspx>